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TWELVE PAGES

THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1899.

"THE WISDOM OF OUR FATHERS."

The joke of progress is "the wisdom of our fathers," but it is well said that they laugh best who laugh last; and it is very likely that our fathers will have the laugh on progress as to "wisdom," if not as to other matters. From 1850 to within very recent years, there was a general hue and cry against inspection laws and all "restraints on trade," as all statute and common-law regulations of buying and selling were called. Inspections of tobacco, of fish, of flour, and other things, including weights and measures, were inveighed against as provisions of the dark ages; they must be repealed, as they added to the costs of all inspected commodities, when the laws of trade were sufficient to insure that dealers would be sure to keep the best; and so most inspection laws were repealed, while others were held obsolete, antiquated and in conflict with the spirit of the age by the courts, and little or nothing of the whole system of inspection was left, or, if any remained, it was no longer compulsory, but left voluntary with producers and dealers.

A very strange inconsistency occurred, however, in Virginia legislation on this subject. After the repeal of the laws compelling the inspection of tobacco by impartial public inspectors, in the very year the General Assembly repealed the inspection of flour and fish, it actually passed a stringent statute imposing an examination of all physicians thereafter licensed—recognizing the necessity of inspecting the qualifications of the people's doctors, but ignoring the equally necessary inspection of the qualities of the people's drugs and medicines, and revoking existing inspection of the people's food!

This cry for abolishing silly and antiquated restrictions on trade was general over the whole country, and there ensued a general abolition, not only of all inspections, but of all laws against engrossing (monopoly), forestalling (cornering), regulating (speculating by raising the price on articles bought up in the same market), &c., &c. Since then "the laws of trade" have developed every imaginable rascality, in adulteration, and sharp practice. Nothing is what it seems or claims to be.

Government and people, in war and peace, are swindled egregiously in everything they buy: Our flour is mixed with Indian corn meal, and various white earths; our meat may be only "embalmed beef." Everything we eat may be, and probably is, some deleterious compound; everything we drink is more or less doctored; and we are cheated in quality, price and quantity in an attempt to assert a counterfeit wisdom over the real wisdom of our fathers, and to enable impostors to enjoy the laws of trade that irresistibly impel them to every expedient to chouse us from the cradle to grave.

We lose more every day by the absence of inspection than an efficient and thoroughly well organized system of inspection, in all essential things, would cost us a month. And this business under "the laws of trade" has just fairly got under way. Already all sensible and thoughtful people are demanding of State and Federal government the restoration of inspection and of safe-guarding provisions against the unscrupulous license of trade and speculation, and before long our own bitter experience will amply vindicate "the wisdom of our fathers," if it has not yet done so.

We assume that our ancestors who established these laws of inspection and in restraint of the evil practices, inspired by the greedy lust of gain, had

had no experience of what they so carefully sought to prevent; that they were newcomers into a strange world,—greenhorns, just arrived, and unacquainted with life and business; whereas the fact is that they had the experience of generations, for they first endured evils before they set laws to guard against them, and thus saved us from the experience they had suffered and in which their laws were founded. We are beginning to learn this since we have cast down the defences they erected; and out of a painful school (fools they say will learn in no other) we are to be taught the wisdom which our forefathers sought in vain to bequeath us.

Natural laws, and every divine command, are in vain in human control, unless enforced by human means, powers and penalties. The laws of God and nature are for our guidance in framing our codes, and the decalogue is inoperative among wicked men until enforced by temporal sanctions. Honesty is, indeed, the best policy, as well as a high virtue; but human law has to pass a thousand provisions and inflict as many penalties even to secure a pretence of honesty!

THEY DO PROTEST TOO MUCH.

Discussing that eminent statesman's, Dick Croker's, Republican opinion on silver, the Richmond Times calls Dick "a practical politician" and "a political expert," and also "a business man." The Times confesses that Croker has no principles; that he is strictly on the make—to win; and, of course, to win for himself. The Times actually, in speaking of Croker's verdict against silver, has the effrontery to speak of the party as "we!" "Why," it asks, "should we carry a dead weight?" WE do not intend to do so,—neither Croker's weight; nor the weight of the Times; yoke-fellows in opinion, or in declarations against silver.

But we thank the Times for that word "expert." In this relation, it does not quote Mr. Croker as a statesman, nor a patriot, nor a financier, nor a man of principle; it disclaims doing that, and frankly alleges that it quotes him, not as a Democrat, but as a practical politician and a "political expert." Expert evidence, even when sworn to in court, is notoriously of the sort paid for, and only offered in exchange for pay. The Times concludes thus:

"The party will ignore Mr. Croker's advice at its peril. He is the most astute politician of the age. Politics is his business and he knows it well."

When and how did the Times learn that Dick is "the most astute politician of the age?" Or when did it adopt that opinion of him? We fear that it has only been since Croker's "expert" opinion and advice coincided with that of the Times, and the Times has been giving us this information, opinion and advice, in effect, ever since the Chicago convention of 1896, and before.

The Times has been holding itself aloft, on a high plane,—far above the Croker level; and alleging that it was guided by principle to abandon the Democratic party, to fight for McKinley and gold against Bryan, silver and Democratic principles. And yet here it is urging the Democratic party to be led by such unprincipled fellows as it confesses Croker to be! Can it be possible that it itself followed Hanna and gold because it desired to be on the winning side? If not, how dare it talk as it does to the faithful Democrats who stood by the party despite internal treachery and Hanna's bribery, corruption and fraudulent returns? Gold did not win fairly in 1896, as everybody knows, but only by the most villainous corruption; and if silver was slain in that foul way, it becomes every decent Democrat, at least, to avenge the murder.

But silver is not dead, nor moribund. It is immortal. It embodies a right, a principle and a truth above mere material values; and in 1900 it will not be Crokers, nor unprincipled politicians, nor men bent on winning at any sacrifice of principle, or by any means, who will frame the platform, name the candidate and shame the devil with the truth, but the men of 1896, re-inforced by others, who must first be slain before silver dies. With silver dies all hope of restoring honest and free self-government to the American people.

Oh, shade of Thomas Jefferson, when gold would cast thee out, and put Dick Croker in thy place, as the leader and teacher of the Democratic party, to what depths of demoralization have politics fallen! "Anything to win" is a base slogan, and they who adopt it deserve nothing but shameful and irretrievable defeat. Thank heaven, however, we hear this advice only from our enemies, or known traitors, or from men whom none can heed without dishonor. Every true Democrat knows that silver is not dead.

THE RAILWAY POSTAL SERVICE.

The railroads run their trains and fix their schedules for freight and travel, and it is pure delusion that these are at all shaped or affected to furnish any special, extra, or fast service to the Post Office Department. Yet under this delusion, or pretext, very large subsidies have heretofore been given annually by the government to certain favored railroads and railroad syndicates. Very properly, there is strong opposition developing in Congress to these gifts or subsidies to rich corporations, for nothing, under cover of appropriations to pay for extra fast mail trains that do not exist, and never did,—particularly as there is a large annual deficit in the Postal Department, charged to newspapers and publishers,

and which the Loud bill seeks to get out of them and the reading people, not to speak of advertising business men, by depriving them of the small and reasonable privileges heretofore granted them in the mails.

If government has money to subsidize rich railroads, it should not neglect its poorly paid postal railway clerks, who do so much meritorious, difficult and laborious service, at as constant risk of life and limb as the soldier in battle. Stop the subsidies, and recognize the just claims of these brave and diligent clerks,—perhaps the most deserving and self-sacrificing employees in our whole civil service.

MATRIMONY IN WISCONSIN.

The Wisconsin Legislature is wrestling with a matrimonial problem, having been infected, it is presumed, by Dakota, where it is proposed to so alter the divorce laws that one cannot order a decree by telegraph with a reasonable certainty of finding it in waiting in less time than twenty-four hours.

Out in Wisconsin the idea that the holy institution of matrimony should be swathed in a lot of red tape has seized the Legislature, and, therefore, it is proposed to make a license issued by the State a prerequisite to the marriage ceremony in that enlightened commonwealth. This proposition is no doubt based on the theory that Wisconsin has an interest in matrimony, and may, with propriety, require of candidates for the marriage state that they shall at least contribute to the State archives a record of their names, ages, places where they first saw the light, etc. This is indeed a radical departure. Heretofore the only apparent reason for the marriage ceremony in Wisconsin was to provide a fee for an accommodating preacher or justice of the peace. The State held that if a maiden was desirous of changing her name and local habitation and found a man willing to assist her it was strictly her own private business, and to embarrass them by requiring that they tell who they were, and when and where they first appeared as part and parcel of the inhabitants of this mundane sphere was a curtailment of personal liberty and in the nature of sumptuary law. Dakota held to the position that if husband and wife desired to be divorced it was their personal affair, and courts were created to enter a decree strictly in accordance with their wishes. Wisconsin caught on.

There is in the estimation of too many people too little sanctity attached to the marriage relation, which is not to be lightly assumed nor lightly discarded. Reformation along this line is sadly needed in more States than Dakota and Wisconsin, and the quicker it comes the quicker the best and truest interests of society will be conserved.

KEEP THE PEACE.

To judge from the tone of the administration organs, the Hannaites think another war is necessary to assure their continued ascendancy through the election of next year, by hook or crook, and to carry out their schemes of money and military rule. They are now seeking to bring on hostilities with Germany about Samoa and Samoan affairs, and much is said to egg our authorities into taking aggressive attitudes toward Germany and to provoke the Emperor of that country.

Any causes of offence we may have against Germany are directly traceable to him or his inspiration. For that very reason, we should make all due allowances for Germany.

We have great respect for the German people, whose merits of character, capacity and achievement are varied and vast, and who not only furnish a large proportion of our best living citizenship, but have supplied a great part of our best ancestry, not only in Virginia and North Carolina, but in all our original States. Gen. Rorer, in a recent address, justly and ably reminded us of how greatly Virginia and the whole country are indebted to early German immigration, while one has but to look around him to see and hear how much our present population is enriched by native German elements.

These are sentimental considerations, no doubt; but who would willingly violate them to perpetuate the Hannaitism that has brought upon us so much domestic evil, wrong and disgrace, and which forebodes so much more domestic and foreign disaster? Who would lightly place our immense infusion of the German race in hostile relations to the Fatherland? Not we; and we seriously deprecate this wicked attempt to foment difficulties with any nation, and especially with Germany, to help the fortunes of the most injurious and dangerous and degenerate party that ever afflicted our country.

But with a knavish government, on our part, and a mad Emperor, on the part of Germany, there is no telling what may be the issue of these Samoan differences, that should easily be settled amicably to the honor of all concerned.

If Alger goes, Hanna must go,—and next year McKinley and his trust-teased party must go.

The indications are that Commissary General Eagan's career will be ready for subjection to an "embalming" process when the courtmartial is through with him.

We have always been distrustful of "la grippe," and now comes news from Washington that it may eventuate in an extra session of Congress, "La

Grippe" is, therefore, a national enemy to be warred upon until finally and forever exterminated. Up, fellow citizens, and at the enemy of the people.

Colorado teaches the Sisterhood of States a valuable lesson in inaugurating her Governors. The expense of inducting the last into office aggregated only one hundred and five dollars.

We had hoped that Greater New York would at last try to be good. The fact that she has extended a call to three Chicago preachers is very discouraging. We fear there is little hope for Gotham.

According to Mayor W. H. Daly files, which hitherto have not been accused of being particular in the matter of food, draw the line at "embalmed beef" furnished the army by Commissary General Eagan.

One Dr. Christopher has unwisely placed temptation before the world in the announcement that children, like vegetables, start to grow when the weather becomes warm and balmy. Let us hope that this will not suggest to our Board of Education the idea of retrenching by cutting off the last two weeks of the Summer term, just to give the children a little time in which to compete with vegetation.

A Kansas man has added another great discovery to the large number that have contributed to make their authors famous. A bill is to be introduced in the Legislature and enacted into law prohibiting the mortgaging of homesteads, and this will probably be followed by laws abolishing debt, poverty, sickness, sorrow, pain and death. Kansas never does anything by halves and now that her legislators are getting their hands well in we may expect the millennium to be wooed and won in the Sunflower Land.

The country will rejoice that the Senate has passed the Nicaragua Canal Bill, and it is to be hoped there will be no obstruction to it in the House. This long longed-for connection of our Eastern with our Western coast and waters, as a national American work, is now in fair prospect of construction, and it will contribute immensely to our wealth, strength and just patriotic pride. It will also, under our liberal management, be hardly a less blessing to the world and a benefit to international travel and commerce than the Suez Canal.

The bill as passed, too, seems to be properly guarded against jobs and swindles, extravagant and wasteful squandering, and promises a successful construction within a reasonable time, without such scandals as attended the Panama failure, or the Suez triumph. Alas! that one cannot consider the great achievement of M. de Lesseppe's engineering, without recalling the cloud that hung over his connection with it.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

LET US HAVE A CHANGE.

The scandalous Senatorial conflicts in Pennsylvania, Delaware, West Virginia, Nebraska, Montana, California, and Nevada certainly constitute very strong arguments in favor of the election of United States Senators by direct vote of the people.

It was assumed by the framers of the Constitution, in the experimental stage of the government, that the popular choice of members of the Federal Senate would be capricious and weak, and that it would be better to confer the power to elect these high officials upon select bodies of representatives in the State Legislature. Thus it was that the State Legislatures in choosing United States Senators. For the first half of the country's history this view was generally justified by the action of the State Legislatures; but in the past fifty years there has been a great change in this respect. In many States when an election for United States Senator is pending, corrupt men seek seats in the Legislature in order to sell their votes to the highest bidder. This is an evil which will spread in proportion as the position of United States Senator shall become prized by men of wealth for the dignity that it confers, or by unscrupulous politicians for the opportunities it presents.

A TRIBUTE TO ENSIGN BAGLEY.

(Philadelphia Record.)
Chaplain Clark, of the Naval Academy, in his address in memory of the late Ensign Bagley, on Sunday last, spoke some words of eloquence which were not only a tribute to the first American officer who fell in the late war, but which had a wider application.

"When a man has lived and died for a profession," he said, "the best of him is there. His profession inscribes an ornate and perfectly adapted frame, the things that men should live by. They lie within the inclosure of that profession like harp strings, and a man's alto is the touch upon them that more or less brings out their truth and beauty and power." Again, there was truth and beauty in the thought that each bit of diamond dust carries in it the likeness and lustre of the whole mass; each leaf outlines in its structure the tree it grows upon; each obscure atom of a crushed snowflake always shows a wonderful six-rayed glory of the entire pattern. So the acts of men, minute parts and fragments of their natures, are copies, fac-similes of the original.

These metaphors were not only pertinent to the character of the gallant young officer whose fate inspired them, but they have a lasting beauty of their own; and they deserve to be treasured in our memorial literature as an incentive to men in every field of honest effort to be true to their best ideals, and to rise to their highest possibilities. "Glory is an accident," says Roosevelt, but duty done is in itself a glory which by no mischance of fate can ever be despoiled of its laurels.

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